



The Waterbury, CT Chapter of

# The Compassionate Friends

Nov/Dec 2011

*The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help group for parents and their families who have experienced the death of a child of any age, including adult children, and from any cause. We offer hope in a network of support, friendship and understanding that only friends who have "been there" can give.*



## Donor Family voices ~holiday remembrance

***It can be comforting to find a way to include honoring your loved one's memory in your holiday plans. These are some ways Donor Families shared.***

My son Terry died March 11, 1998 at age 19 and gave the gift of life to seven people. Christmas was his favorite holiday. I buy a special ornament each year in his honor. When I have grandchildren, I will pass these ornaments onto them and tell them of the uncle they never met. I also buy gifts for less fortunate families and children in Terry's honor. He was always a giving person and this way he still gives on long after death,



~Kathy Snow

Since I lost my son Justin close to Christmas, it was especially painful to celebrate my favorite holiday without him. My family and I decided to travel to a new, sunnier destination over the holiday rather than to spend it at home. We invite other family members to join us. Each family member chooses one activity they want to do there. It could be stargazing or snorkeling or just trying a local restaurant. We started a new tradition that helped us start living again.

~Pamela White

Each year since our son passed away five years ago and became a donor, I make a monetary donation to our local soup kitchen in his name. I also take whatever money I would have spent on him for Christmas if he were still alive and purchase toys and donate them to a local foundation that delivers them to children in local hospitals during the holiday season. Last year, I took my son's daughter, age nine, with me to do the shopping and it really made us both feel better.

~Susan Wareham

My daughter, Tania, has been gone now almost nine years. A few years ago, I asked family and friends to

write a letter recalling their favorite memories of Tania. I put them in a Christmas stocking. I hang this stocking every year with all the others and on Christmas night, when all is quiet, I sit and read them. They bring a mixture of smiles and tears but, at the same time, soothe my heart a bit. I look forward to the day my grandchildren, Tania's niece and nephew, can read them and learn a little more about their aunt.

~Pam Legault

Our 17-year-old daughter died right before Christmas. Sarah loved Christmas and had just decorated our home for the holidays. Every year on the anniversary of her death, we decorate the house as a way of remembering her. Our family has always attempted to avoid "hustle and bustle" around the holiday and focus on the meaning of giving. We honor Sarah and her passion for teaching preschool by carrying that passion on. Every year, we adopt several preschoolers who are in need of gifts and provide them with toys and clothing. This helps to focus on what brings hope rather than on what we are missing.

~Sue Wintz

I am organizing a candle lighting ceremony in our community. I got involved with the Boys & Girls Club, which my daughter liked and brought the "Festival of Trees" to our town. This is my way of keeping her spirit alive. Christmas was always her favorite holiday and she was always about giving to others.

~Linda Johnson

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*Start some new traditions for your holiday season, something a little different than what you did for all the years that your child was alive. Do something in his/her honor as his/her gift. You cannot give 2 or 3 presents for X amount of years then subtract one gift and expect to feel normal. This way, you are giving the same amount of gifts and it somehow seems right.*

Judy, Editor